

HISTORY
OF THE
FEVER AND AGUE WAR
IN
WALLINGFORD,
IN TWO LETTERS,

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THE FEVER AND AGUE WAR.

FIRST LETTER.

ADVANCE OF THE ENEMY—OUR WOUNDED SOLDIERS—SHALL WE
RETREAT?—THE TRUMPET CALL TO BATTLE—BEGINNING OF
NEW WAR MEASURES.

Wallingford Community, April 30, 1876.

WE look out on a busy scene to-day from our dining-room windows—men with pick-axes, shovels and wheel-barrows, horses with plows, scrapers and carts, confusedly tearing up the ground on the north side of the house. They are excavating for a large cellar, 64 feet by 32, with a wing extension making it 72 feet from front to rear. This does not look much like abandoning the place; but two years ago about this time the whole Community here and at Oneida were gravely considering the question whether they should not retreat from Wallingford. Referring to our filed reports I find it the topic of discussion evening after evening in June, '74. Mr. C. and Mr. J. were chosen advocates of the two sides, and they made exhaustive

pleas : others were specially invited to speak, and all had a chance to express their minds. What was the matter ? Matter enough ! The whole Community was being honey-combed with the *fever and ague*, and Wallingford was the inlet. By our system of exchanges some sixty of the family had been inoculated in a course of years with that disease, and the groan began to be audible, How long shall this go on ? How many more of our children shall we throw to Moloch ?

When we first came here, and for twenty years after, the salubrity of the place was considered extraordinary. Everybody was expected to go back to Oneida with more color and plumpness than they had when they came. But about the year '71 a stealthy enemy crept up the valley from the south, and began to mar our peace. The fever and ague had infested Hamden, seven miles below, for several years. Now it appeared in Wallingford. G. W. Noyes, who died at this Commune in '70, was undoubtedly a sacrifice to the malignity of this invader ; but its presence was unrecognized at that time. In '71 its hateful mien was fully disclosed, and made the Commune *shake*, if not with nervous terror, with a sensation very much like it. In the fall of that year there were eighteen in the family at one time who were "interviewed" by this hideous demon every other day ; a state of things which kept the rest of us running with hot bricks and blankets, ice-water and bath-tubs, pretty much all the time. We did not use quinine then. No, we suffered all the fiend could inflict one year without mitigation from that famous drug. We met it with faith, patience, criticism, resistance—spiritual therapeutics alone. And, in sooth, we had some very encouraging victories on that platform. I find in our files several narratives of personal experience during the period, with two of which I propose at once to enliven this som-

ber letter. The time of these experiences was about the middle of September, 1871 :

MISS A.'S NARRATIVE.

I had been sick about four weeks. I was very weak in body, and my ambition and faith were still weaker. I cared but little what became of me. But finally I had a chill which was so dreadful that it aroused me to think what I could do to avoid another. It seemed as though another like that would kill me. I resolved, if it were a possible thing, to go to meeting the next evening, which would come on what I called my "well day." I thought perhaps Mr. Noyes would say something to help me. I was well paid for the exertion. He talked about the power of faith and unity, and I felt new hope and courage. He said the faith of the whole Community was available to those who were one with it, and my heart took hold of his words.* I went to sleep thinking about them. I waked many times that night, and my first thought always was, Is it time for my chill? and then the dread of it would rush over me, as only those who have had an awful shake are able to imagine. But my second thought was the meeting and Mr N.'s talk, and that would make me quiet, and I would go to sleep again. At five o'clock I awoke and felt the symptoms that precede a chill coming on. I said to myself, If it is God's will that this thing should take its course I want to be reconciled, but if not I believe he has the power to stop it even now. Then it flashed across my mind that if I could only get into a good perspiration it would save me; but my bed-clothes were insufficient, and I knew if I stirred to get any more the chill would have me for sure. So I said to myself, If I am to escape, somebody will come in; though it seemed absurd to expect it so early. I lay about ten minutes quietly hoping, when C. opened the door, and inquired how I was. I told her what I would like, and she covered me up warm and left me. I was very soon in a profuse sweat, and went by the time without a chill. I kept my bed till the usual time for the fever had passed; then dressed myself, and from that time to this have not had a symptom of fever and ague.

In explanation of the following narrative I may say, that when worse came to worst that sorry September, it was decided to send seven of the cases to Oneida. Mr. Noyes conducted the party, and a ridiculous traveling party it was, though the

journey was timed with all possible reference to the intermission of the fits :

MR. W.'S NARRATIVE.

I had had what I supposed was only a cold for a week or more, when, just before the "refuse lot," as they have been called, got ready to start, a racking chill forbade me to "lay that flattering unction to my soul," and I gave notice that I had joined the "shakers," and was immediately put on the list of candidates for O. C. On the way Mr. N. asked me if I could be responsible for the baggage which would have to be re-checked at Albany. I knew we should reach there just about the time my chill was due ; but I was ashamed to refuse, as Mr. N. had his hands so full ; and I said I would be responsible. As we neared Albany I felt the chill coming on—I had all the premonitory sensations ; but the thought, what a disgrace it would be if I should fail to do my duty, nerved my will to the utmost ; and when we got to the station, though I felt pretty blue, I was able to go about and do all that was necessary. This experience gave me courage, and I felt better and better to the end of my journey. The next day about the same hour the symptoms came on again with renewed force. I betook myself to my room, and covering up warm in bed turned my heart to God, asking him to help me. A spiritual power came upon me ; I seemed to hear the question, "Will you give God the glory?" My heart responded, "God shall have all the glory;" and immediately following that came a baptism of life and love and warmth, which pervaded my whole being as sensibly as the heat in the Turkish Bath. I had been very cold, but I was now in a perfect glow of warmth reaching to all my extremities. My heart melted, and I never felt the Lord so near me as then. The disease was broken up, and I have had nothing of it since. It convinced me beyond a doubt that the fever and ague has a Master ; that it is not almighty ; that there is a control stronger than that in the invisible world.

These narratives were drawn out for the edification of the Community a year ago, but what they say about the permanence of the cure holds good to this day. There was more experience of this kind that first season, and criticism broke up the chills in one desperate case at least. In fact, those who could only patiently endure obtained "a better resurrection" in

the end than the many who accepted deliverance afterward from quinine. But to go on:

The winter brought a respite — only a respite. The shafts flew thick and fast as soon as spring opened. In July quinine was called to the rescue. The Wallingford Community was under a great pressure of business that summer, and it could not stop to make issue with the fever and ague — it must *evade* the ugly thing — and quinine was the expedient. We were building a stone dam across the Quinnipiac by which to create a reservoir of 150 acres and obtain a 200 horse-power — not an undertaking to be carried on with intermitting energy. At the same time the job-printing was in a flourishing state of growth, demanding extensive improvements and requiring the working corps to be kept good, if we would not lose our fortune at the tide, in a business which we cherished above all others. Quinine helped us through this pressure, and we shall always appreciate its service. We took it right heartily after we once began making a family rush, as W. C. always does when it moves — not meaning by that expression excessive but *united* action. We had scientific counsel and followed it faithfully. The “drops” were administered by officials, but it was done on the first suspicion, and sometimes the whole family together made wryful sport of taking each a spoonful of the stuff.

But quinine is a shift, not a cure, as everybody knows. It kept the business going here two years, but not without mortgaging the general stock of health more or less. And for all it could do, *change to Oneida* was found frequently necessary. But this alternative involved the constant exposure of fresh victims to the malaria. It was a measure of relief, in short, which communized the evil, weakening one family at last as much as the other. At the time of the discussion which I mention there was

more fever and ague at O. C. than at W. C. There were more persons there at least who had had it and were inclined to panic about it. Change to Oneida was a cure, but not immediate. It took time to starve out the chills. They followed their victims, and lived on the malaria "in the system," as the doctors say, for weeks and months, and even years, when the system was saturated with a long soak. If you stopped their chattering, they would take perhaps a kind of *dumb* possession for awhile, than which a good shake now and then was thought by some folks entirely to be preferred. And what was strange, instances occurred of persons living at W. C. a long time, in one case three years, without taking the disease, and then suddenly coming down with it on a change to Oneida.

As things went on it grew harder and harder to ask folks to come to W. C., and volunteers were scarce. This charming home became unpopular. Folks began to ask, especially at the mother Community, whether we had not better follow the example of the Rappites, and at any cost, no matter what, of sentiment or money, get away from a place cursed by the fever and ague. Two circumstances in the spring of '74 brought the question to an issue. One was, that during the winter previous book-binding and electrotyping had been added to the printing works here by a kind of natural development, and these new departments called for new help, and of course for enlargement of the W. C. family. The other was a proposition from W. C. to buy "Cozicot," our place by the seaside. This place, which is near where we used to go summers, was then in market—very cheap and very desirable—desirable in any case, but especially so for a Community harassed by the chills. These circumstances forced the question, Shall we enlarge at W. C. or contract? shall we operate for continuing or withdrawing?

I will not attempt any account of the discussion. Suffice it to say it was warm and long, and ended by referring the decision to Mr. Noyes, the public sentiment being about equally divided. With Mr. Noyes's paper in reply I close this letter, intending in another to tell how we come to be here still and to be strengthening our stakes :

MR. NOYES'S DECISION.

The responsibility put upon me of deciding the question about selling out our property at Wallingford is rather heavy. I wish only to find the mind of the Lord. If all seek that with me, we shall all decide together.

This morning I had some clear thinking. It came, as clear thinking generally comes, in a great clash of inducements. My feeling was that we *must* get rid of fever and ague ; and on the other hand, that we *cannot* leave Wallingford immediately, and that we *ought not* to leave it at all. My mind ran thus : Our printing engagements at Wallingford require us to go on, at least for some months. *i. e.*, till the present ague season is past ; our crops cannot be left without damage and dishonor ; we have no offer nor prospect of immediate sale ; we have no room nor preparation for the Wallingford family here. Putting all these things together, it seemed to me that the Lord had not made the inviting preparations for an immediate change, which he usually makes in such great transactions. Then comes the question, If we *must* hold on at Wallingford through this season, will there not be time before another ague season to find means of putting an end to the pest ?

And here I could not help raising the query whether we ought to consider that we have exhausted our resources, and that the battle has finally gone against us ? I remember that in the battle of Marengo Napoleon found his whole army, late in the afternoon, defeated and in confusion. One of his best generals said to him, "The battle is lost." He answered, "*There is time to fight another !*" And sure enough, a new column was organized and hurled upon the right point, and before night another battle had given him one of his greatest victories. Probably we have exhausted the virtues of quinine, and know just what it can do for us ; perhaps we have exhausted the virtue of patience in submitting to the ague as the world does and toughing it out. But have we exhausted the virtue of faith ?

Are we not rising into clearer faith, and especially into faith against disease? And if so, are not our conditions for fighting the ague changing for the better? Especially I am impressed to ask, Have we exhausted the virtue of our old standard medicine — criticism? I remember what criticism did for us in the diphtheria war. I remember how we criticised Mr. B., who was the first case of ague at Wallingford; and I see that he, *with* criticism and *without* quinine, has come out of the war with less ailments than most of his fellow-soldiers. So we treated C., and though she had a long tug, her health and endurance have been very good since.

What if we should change our policy of medication, and give less quinine and more criticism? We are certainly learning to hate the ague more and more, and in that respect our position is all the time changing for the better. We are taking in larger and larger charges of indignation-powder, which will hurl our criticism with ever-increasing momentum. The crisis of discussion that we are passing through will have a great effect in that direction, if it does nothing more. Might we not try the experiment of putting all existing cases of ague through a thorough course of criticism, and treating new cases in the same way as soon as they occur? Criticism has certainly gained new power among us within the last year. Why not expect it will produce new results?

As I hate the ague, so I hate retreat before it. Will it not follow us? Is it not already at work here as well as at Wallingford? And if we escape this particular pestilence by falling back, are there not others as bad or worse, that will corner us here or anywhere, till we face and drive the whole of them in Christ's fashion?

I am willing to notify God that we cannot stand the ague at Wallingford beyond this season; that we will do our best with the light and faith that we have, and if he gives us strength to make an end of it before next winter, we will gladly go on with the great enterprise begun at Wallingford; but otherwise we shall have to quit.

J. H. NOYES.

This decision was received by both families and both parties with vociferous applause.

H. H. S.

SECOND LETTER.

THE FORLORN HOPE—"FIRE AND CRITICISM"—DO OR DIE—
VICTORY!—THE ENEMY ROUTED ON THE WHOLE LINE.

Wallingford Community, May 8, 1876.

"Shall we break up at W. C., or shall we go on?" was the question in '74. I closed my last letter with Mr. Noyes's decision. There was a purpose and a prophecy in that decision. The purpose was one more battle; the prophecy was victory. The critical engagement took place on the 4th of March, '75. There had been a truce as usual through the winter, but with the spring came a challenge—a dart from the enemy. A chill struck one of us in the night. The whole Commune was aroused; it was do or die, now. A meeting was called in the morning before breakfast. Those who were present at that meeting describe it as a seance which invoked a supernatural control. They were lifted out of themselves into an earnestness, an indignation, a resistance, that was more than human. Power came on them. It was as palpable as a rushing wind. I find the practical outcome of this excitement contained in a proposition made by Mr. Noyes at the time, which I will give with his accompanying remarks:

MR. N'S. PROPOSITION—THE FORLORN HOPE.

We came here ten years ago fresh from the battle with the diphtheria; and very soon after we began the Wallingford series of the *Circular* we published an account of our victory,

giving the libretto of our stage scene of the diphtheria-treatment with ice and criticism. The echo of that account is circulating to this day, and has entered into the battle with the diphtheria that is going on abroad.

We are now entering upon a desperate encounter with the fever and ague, apparently destined to be the last; and now again why should not we trust in the Lord, and look for weapons analagous to those that were successful ten years ago? We used criticism and *ice* before. Why not now use criticism and the *Turkish Bath*? Perhaps the ague requires fire instead of ice. When the chill is coming on, it seems to be the fever working inwardly, and when it breaks out in external heat and perspiration it goes off. It seems rational that artificial heat, hastening the perspiration, should prevent the chill. Now if we add criticism to this rational preventive, it seems to me we shall have a new advantage of the enemy. And if we can start an effectual movement of this kind in our family we shall be able by and by to set it going in the region about us, and the whole malaria will disappear. There is a terrible want all through this population for something new and hopeful in the war with the fever and ague. Quinine and all its kindred have failed, and the woes and indignation of the people are rising to sublimity. What I would propose is, briefly, that we organize a "Board" whose business shall be, as soon as symptoms of the ague appear in any case, to put the patient through a course of *criticism and fire*. Let a person that is attacked any time of day or night be put into the Turkish Bath. The use of the criticism is not to reprove mainly, but to exhort, to encourage, to stimulate, to concentrate the attention of the family on the case, and surround it with a good, healthy spirit. We were so terribly in earnest about the diphtheria that we put our whole hearts into the work. But the temptation is to think we can get along with the ague because it kills no one. We ought not to tolerate any such feeling as that. Let us fight the ague with all the earnestness that we did the diphtheria. If it does not kill individuals, it is going to kill the Community, and that is the worst kind of killing; and then it will follow us to Oneida, and kill the Community there. It seems to me that if there is promptitude, energy and wisdom enough to take these chills at the right time, we have the means to break them up; and my expectation is, if we get the movement started here, that it will spread in the surrounding population and the whole malaria will disappear.

A Board was appointed before the meeting broke up, and it lost no time in giving the member whose saucy chill had been

the signal for hostilities, a thorough course of 'criticism and fire.' The result was decisive. She was cured. After that it was not usual for a person to wait till his nose was an icicle before calling for succor. When the infected began to yawn and stretch and feel tired—awfully tired—without any apparent reason, when their bones became conscious, or, as some one expressed it, they "felt a great superfluity of ossification in their limbs," they hastened to put themselves in the care of the Board ; or if any were too listless to do that, the vigilance of this body supplied all lack. Their zeal was sleepless ; they allowed nothing to interfere with their duty. They were on hand day and night at the least alarm or appearance of danger. And their work was effectual. The chills were headed off, discouraged, beaten—sent to limbo. The health and courage of the Commune rose every day ; and before a month had past victory was so sure that the united Communes passed a vote to quit their double-minded policy entirely, settle down at Wallingford, and begin preparations for a new house.

The bath was used very freely by the whole family during the campaign, and was of great importance as a protection and preventive, as well as a cure. And here I should tell, perhaps, how we came to have a Turkish Bath, as it was not introduced among us with any anticipation of this great result. One of the O. C. men, Mr. H. W. Burnham, who was often in New York on business, took a bath at Dr. Shepard's institution in Brooklyn and wrote home a glowing account of it, which was published in the *Oneida Circular*, August 17, 1874. This attracted the attention of the Community, and they sent Dr. T. R. Noyes to make investigations and see if we could not have the luxury at home. Dr. Miller, the proprietor of a Turkish Bath Hotel in New York, with whom Dr. Noyes was

acquainted, generously sympathized with the project and gave him every opportunity to examine ; he got the idea, came back, and in less than a month had a bath all ready for use, in the basement of the O. C. mansion ; not so complicated and magnificent as that in the city, but very enjoyable, and affording all the essential benefits of any Turkish Bath. This was in October, '74. The following January Mr. Noyes came from Oneida here ; and soon missing his accustomed refreshment, began to contrive how we could have the luxury here too. Yankee wit was sufficient. We had already a common bath-room, with fixtures for hot and cold water. Now for a partition ; a stove in one little room ; an additional faucet, with hose and sprinkler in the other ; a shampooing board to let down on the old tub ; an adjacent room made to do double duty as a cooling-off room and a place to distribute clothes from the laundry—that was all. The O. C. Bath cost two or three hundred dollars—a great reduction of the estimated expense as Dr. Miller figured it ; but the W. C. Bath did not cost fifty dollars. This we call “reducing the Turkish Bath to its lowest terms.”

We got the Bath, as I said, without any idea of what it was going to do. But when we found it such an engine against our foe, it appeared to us of course a strategic contrivance of Providence—a *masked battery*, with which we had stolen a march on the ague without knowing it ourselves.

In the course of the spring the benefit of the Bath had been extended to several of our neighbors ; and reports of its effect exciting demand, another Bath was fitted up in June and opened to the public. A place was found in the building containing the W. C. printing works, laundry, etc., and the appointments were on a more generous scale of course than in what we have called the “Turkish Bath reduced to its lowest terms.” Here all sum-

mer the work went on. Head after head of the hydra monster was cut off. The prestige grew strong ; hope and courage added their mighty forces to the movement. Bulletins of victory after victory were circulated in all the infected region—at Meriden, Yalesville, Quinnipiac, North Haven and many places more distant. The disease was routed in detail and on the whole line. This spring not a chill has appeared in the Commune, and if the records of the Bath are any index, only vestiges of the fever and ague remain in the place. In fact, we are told that the doctors of the village say the malaria is passing off—dying out.

“What !” I imagine my readers to exclaim, “Do you pretend to see a connection between that tempest-in-a-teapot, that puff of excitement in your little Commune one morning last year, and the disappearance of the malaria?” I have not said that yet, but the matching of events is quite curious you will allow. We attacked the fever and ague in its full career—we attacked it expecting to drive it away, and it is going—gone. And there is a philosophy in favor here, which, if it is sound, makes the assumption you impute to us not altogether fanatical after all. It is the spiritualistic philosophy, and reasons in this case thus :

“The fever and ague is to be treated as a *spiritual control*, and if we know how to repel evil spirits we can drive off the fever and ague. How do we repel evil spirits? ‘*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*’ Power to resist comes by terrible fear, intense repugnance, desperate hatred. When these feelings are stirred up to the requisite pitch in any place, fever and ague will disappear. This is the only theory by which we can explain the periodicity of wandering diseases—the coming and going of the fever and ague, for instance, in certain districts. It has a run in a place till the repugnance of the people has accumulated and grown so strong that the evil spirits cannot

stand it and flee. Then after awhile, when the repugnance has grown weak and the push against the disease has ceased, they come back again. The worst thing about quinine is that it tends to make people feel easy, and they are not excited to the necessary resistance to effectually repel the fever and ague. The spirits that are concerned in this disease have evidently the same eagerness to get into connection with flesh and blood that the rapping spirits have, and nothing but the right pitch of spiritual resistance can repel them."

Now, according to this theory, we have a right to claim that the vehement revolt of the Community against the fever and ague, and the health and hope which were spread far and wide among its victims by their example and by the Turkish Bath, have brought on a crisis which might otherwise have been delayed for years; and have really, not only cured and prevented thousands of individual cases of the disease, but substantially expelled the spiritual virus (ignorantly called malaria) which was its mysterious cause.

H. H. S.